

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 SIL-01 LAB-04 AID-05 IGA-01

/083 W

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R 281710Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7318

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 923

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PGOV, DM

SUBJ: STATUS REPORT ON GENERAL STRIKE AGAINST PRES KEREKOU (5)

REF COTONOU 921 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY: GOVT HAVING REFUSED TO GIVE CIVIL SERVANTS THEIR MONTHLY PAY ESTERDAY, OFFICIAL RADIO ANNOUNCES THAT (A) THERE WILL BE NO PAY FOR THEM UNTIL GENERAL STRIKE IS OVE OVER AND (B) ANY EMPLOYEE, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, WHO FAILS TO REPORT FOR DUTY JUNE 30 WILL BE FIRED. SECURITY FORCES ARE PREVENTING POPULATION FROM LEAVING CAPITAL. ARRESTS CONTINUE. SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT WITH WHOM EMBASSY HAS BEEN NEGOTITING COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM PROJECT HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN BEATEN TO DEATH BY POLICE. KEREKOU IS ALLEGEDLY ON DRUGS MOST OF TIME AND UNABLE TO ACT RATIONALLY. IT IS SAID HE HAS SWORN TO
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KILL EVERYONE WHO OPPOSES HIM. REPORTEDLY SEKOU TOURE HAS

GIVEN KEREKOU SOME BROTHERLY ADVICE. TENSION IN COTONOU REMAINS HIGH. END SUMMARY

1. WITH MOST GOVT OFFICES CLOSED ON SATURDAY AND PRIVATE SECTOR WORKING ONLY HALF DAY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS STRENGTH OF GENERAL STRIKE TODAY JUNE 28. JUDGING FROM ADDITIONAL GOVT MEASURES, HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR GOVT BELIEVES THE STRIKE IS VERY SERIOUS. APPARENTLY CIVIL SERVANTS WERE NOT GIVEN THEIR MONTHLY PAY YESTERDAY. PAYDAY FOR PRIVATE SECTOR IS JUNE 30. OFFICIAL RADIO HAS ANNOUNCED (A) THERE WILL BE NO PAY FOR CIVIL SERVANTS UNTIL THE GENERAL STRIKE ENDS AND (B) ANY EMPLOYEE, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, WHO FAILS TO REPORT FOR DUTY MONDAY JUNE 30 WILL BE FIRED. SECURITY FORCES ARE BLOCKING EXITS FROM COTONOU, AND POSSIBLY FROM PORTO-NOVO, TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM FLEEING TO THEIR NATIVE VILLAGES (IN COTONOU AND PORTO-NOVO POLICE CAN OFTEN FIND AND ARREST WORKERS NOT ON THE JOB). COTONOU REMAINS VERY TENSE. IT APPEARS THAT MONDAY AND TUESDAY WILL BE DECISIVE DAYS FOR THE GENEPEL STRIKE.

2. FURTHER NATIONALIZATIONS AND REDUCTION OF GASOLINE PRICES, WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO RALLY PUBLIC OPINION, BEHIND THE GOVT ARE COVERED SEPTELS.

3. GOVT HAS DECLARED IT WILL ABOLISH UNEMPLOYMENT, WHICH IT BRANDS AS AN AWFUL LEGACY OF COLONIALISM AND EARLIER DAHOMEAN ADMINISTRATIONS. CONVOCATIONS OF UNEMPLOYED MEN AT PRESIDENCY SERVE DUAL PURPOSE OF GETTING DISSATISFIED ELEMENTS OFF THE STREET AND RECRUITING MANPOWER INTO THE MILITARY AND/OR PARAMILITARY FORCES.

4. ARRESTS CONTINUE. UNDERSTAND SECURITY AUTHORITIES ARE STILL SEARCHING FOR SOME 24 TRADE UNION LEADERS NOT AS YET JAILED. AMONG THOSE CONSPICUOUSLY SPARED ARE GOVT-SUPPORTED STOOGES LEADERS OF NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONGLOMERATE UNSTD INCLUDING THE STALINIST ROMAIN VILON-GUEZO, WHO IS MEMBER OF REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL BUREAU. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT THE NOW WIDELY PUBLICIZED UNSTD TRACT THAT VILON-GUEZO PUBLICLY DISAVOWED YESTERDAY AFTER LONG TALKS WITH KEREKOU CONSISTED OF AN ULTIMATUM THAT UNSTD WOULD JOIN THE GENERAL STRIKE IF KEREKOU WERE NOT REMOVED BY JUNE 30.

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5. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT FLORENTIN MITO-BABA, DIR OF ROADS AND BRIDGES IN PUBLIC WORKS MINISTRY, THE FUNCTIONARY WITH WHOM THE EMBASSY HAD DONE MOST OF ITS NEGOTIATING ON THE COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM PROJECT UNTIL HIS ARREST A FEW DAYS AGO, WAS BEATEN TO DEATH BY POLICE OR GENDARMES YESTERDAY AFTERNOON. A LEADING MAOIST INTELLECTUAL IN THE "LIGUEURS" REVOLUTIONARY CLUB THAT SPAWNED SO MANY OF THE MILITARY REGIME'S CIVILIAN COHORTS

A FEW YEARS AGO, MITO-BABA WAS ONE OF GROUP OF SEVEN OR EIGHT PUBLIC WORKS ENGINEERS WHO SIGNED DECLARATION FEW DAYS AGO THAT THEY WOULD NOT RETURN TO WORK UNTIL KEREKOU WAS DEPOSED AND EXECUTED FOR AIKPE'S MURDER. FORMER PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER VICTORIEN GBAGUIDI, UNTIL RECENTLY DIRGEN OF PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION OF MINISTRY, THE DOYEN OF CIVIL SERVICE ENGINEERS, WHO HAS BEEN THE MAIN DAHOMEAN NEGOTIATOR ON A NUMBER OF US AID PROJECTS INCLUDING THE PARAKOU-MALANVILLE ROAD, IS ALSO UNDER ARREST.

6. A USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCE REPORTS KEREKOU HAS DELCARED HE WILL KILL WHO OPPOSEHIM. MORE AND MORE REPORTS ALLEGE THAT KEREKOU IS ON DRUGS MOST OF THE TIME, THEREFORE CANNOT ACT RATIONALLY (THERE HAVE BEEN SUCH REPORTS FROM TIME TO TIME SINCE THE JANUARY COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST HIM).

7. THERE ARE TWO VERSIONS OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION KEREKOU ALLEGEDLY HAD WITH SEKOU TOURE EARLY IN WEEK. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, WHO HAS PROVIDED SOME GOOD INFO IN PAST, SEKOU TOURE SAID: (A) NO ONE ACCEPTS OFFICIAL COVER STORY ALLEGING AIKPE ADULTERY WITH MME KEREKOU (B) KEREKOU SHOULD NOT GIVE UP BUT KEEP TRYING, FOR AT LEAST A MONTH, TO RESTORE HIS POSITION, (C) HE SHOULD TURN ON HIS CHARM, TRY TO BE POPULAR, AND (D) A GUINEAN ESCAPE PLANE WILL BE AVAILABLE IN CASE OF NEED. ACCORDING TO ANOTHER SOURCE, SEKOU TOURE URGED KEREKOU TO GET TOUGH.
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